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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' PARTICIPATION IN G8 POLITICAL DIRECTORS
MEETING, ROME, JUNE 8-9

REF: A. ROME 144
 1B. ROME 427

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Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor J. Liam Wasley for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (SBU) Summary: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Bill Burns participated in the third Political Directors meeting of the Italian G8 presidency in Rome, June 8-9. The Political Directors spent most of their time discussing the latest draft of the Chairman's Statement for the June 25-27 G8 Foreign Ministerial in Trieste. The Political Directors generally agreed that the most important political issues to be elevated to the L'Aquila Summit were nonproliferation, counterterrorism, peacekeeping and transnational organized crime, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran, Middle East, DPRK, along with any other major issues that might emerge in the next few weeks. End Summary.

FOOD SECURITY

12. (SBU) The United States proposed the inclusion of references to non-traditional threats like food security in the G8 Chairman's Statement, and secured general agreement in principle for its inclusion. Russia expressed some concern on placing too much emphasis on food security over climate change, energy security and other issues that are generally discussed by leaders.

NONPROLIFERATION

13. (SBU) Russia favored greater focus on steps already taken in nuclear disarmament, as well as making clear that key disarmament matters (such as CTBT and FMCT) are of concern to

more than just Russia and the United States. Germany pushed for the inclusion of text on a "world free of nuclear weapons" (a point on which France has blocked consensus), while France suggested that perhaps language from President Obama's April Prague speech on nonproliferation could resolve the disagreement. Canada stressed that the Leaders' and Foreign Ministers' statements on nonproliferation must be fully consistent and thought the current language could be strengthened.

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN

14. (C) Italy stressed that it wanted the Afghanistan/Pakistan portion of the Chairman's Statement to be short because there would be two other Afghanistan/Pakistan statements issued: a stand-alone G8 statement that would include input from the Afghan and Pakistani governments and a statement from the 47 countries involved in the outreach meetings on Afghanistan/Pakistan. Because of the difficulties of achieving consensus amongst so many countries, the last statement would likely be rather general and free of many engagements. All other delegations agreed on keeping the Afghanistan/Pakistan language in the Chairman's Statement short. Japan and Canada both noted that if the G8's priorities in the stand-alone statement ended up being watered down significantly by the Afghan and Pakistani governments, then the G8 should issue their own statement in some other format so as not to lose the message. Italy agreed that it would be necessary to take stock of the situation in Trieste.

PIRACY

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15. (C) Italy began the piracy discussion by noting the importance of a strong statement that did not duplicate existing efforts, but nonetheless demonstrated a sense of concrete G8 engagement. Because the United States had previously circulated a non-paper opposing the creation of an international piracy tribunal, the Italians accepted that there was no G8 consensus on the international legal framework issue and agreed to fine tune their proposals to address our concerns. The UK shared our legal framework concerns and our call for more general piracy language that would support existing efforts rather than duplicate them. France and Canada also echoed U.S. and UK concerns on not duplicating existing efforts. Canada also shared the U.S. view that Leaders' discussions at the summit should explore the larger issue of maritime security, rather than just piracy off the Horn of Africa.

16. (C) The European Council highlighted the need to build capacity on shore, track pirate assets, and perhaps discourage maritime insurance companies from paying ransoms. Japan (the promoter of much of the problematic G8 piracy proposal) suggested that if others disliked the term "action plan", it could be called "guidance" or something else. Russia stressed the importance of finding a meaningful niche for G8 Ministers to deliver a message on the issue, and said the G8 should worry more about substance than form. Italy tried to argue that the Contact Group on Piracy of the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) was focused only on repression of piracy so the G8 had to do something on capacity building, but was strongly opposed by the United States, UK, Canada, and others. Italy accepted the non-advisability of a piracy conference.

MIDDLE EAST

17. (C) Italy emphasized that because so much was happening at the moment on Israeli-Palestinian issues, this portion of the Chairman's Statement would have to be revised closer to Trieste. France and the European Council argued that the G8 should not make references to "illegal Israeli outposts" in the West Bank since all settlements were illegal under

international law; thus no distinctions should be made about types of settlements. The United States suggested that the statement should use language from the Roadmap on settlements, and proposed the inclusion of text congratulating Lebanon for its peaceful June 7 election and expressing support for Lebanese sovereignty and independence, as well as language supporting a secure and united Iraq and inclusive national elections in Iraq later in the year.

Russia sought reference to G8 support for an Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in Moscow at an appropriate time.

SRI LANKA

¶8. (C) Russia called for "streamlining" language on Sri Lanka to eliminate both references to the need for national reconciliation. Russia also wanted to eliminate any G8 call for the government of Sri Lanka to uphold its human rights obligations and the norms of international human rights law and any G8 call for thorough UN monitoring of developments. Russia argued that the important thing was for the G8 to focus on the humanitarian situation, and that it should not get involved in other areas. The United States, UK, Japan, Canada, and Italy all strongly opposed the Russian effort to

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water down the Sri Lanka language, arguing that national reconciliation was crucial to preventing future violence and terrorism, and that this should be the focus of G8 efforts. Canada and the United States also highlighted the responsibility of the government of Sri Lanka to provide humanitarian access.

BURMA

¶9. (C) Japan reported on its efforts to engage the Burmese government to release Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK). Burmese leaders told the Japanese that ASSK would have a fair trial and claimed they would not interfere in what was an "independent" judicial process. Given that it was not yet known how ASSK's trial would end, the final Burma language would have to be worked out later. Japan stressed that the text should not close off avenues of engagement with the regime. While several delegations (including the U.S.) highlighted the importance of mentioning both ASSK and political prisoners in general, Russia again called for "streamlining" and opposed mentioning ASSK in favor of a general reference to political prisoners. All other delegations strongly opposed this Russian idea; the UK termed ASSK the symbol of Burmese democracy and said any move against her was a move against democracy in Burma. Germany said the regime should be held responsible for holding democratic, free, and fair elections in 2010. The UK accepted this idea as long as the G8 did nothing that seemed to endorse what was likely to be a flawed electoral process.

YEMEN

¶10. (SBU) When Russia questioned Italy's call for "sustaining a comprehensive political reform agenda" in Yemen, Italy explained that it intended only to provide an early warning on the need for serious reforms in order to strengthen Yemen's institutions and prevent it from becoming a failed state. Russia then suggested clarification of the G8 message, saying it should focus on strengthening the Yemeni institutional framework rather than issue a vague reform call that might be misunderstood.

IRAN

¶11. (C) Russia favored focusing on the G8 commitment to finding a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and downplaying Iran's intransigence on its nuclear program or the need for Iran to restore the confidence of the international community in the exclusively peaceful nature of its program. The United States, Japan, and Canada all

stressed their preference for the current, stronger G8 language highlighting the G8's concerns on Iran's behavior.

DPRK, CAUCASUS, SUDAN, WEST AFRICA, ZIMBABWE

¶12. (SBU) The political directors concluded with brief discussions of several other issues. On the DPRK, they agreed to await the outcome of the pending UNSC resolution in New York before discussion of G8 language or actions. On the Caucasus, they agreed on the importance of supporting the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process along with improved Turkish-Armenian ties. The UK called for G8 support for the June 23 Washington DC conference in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan. The UK also sought and received G8 support for condemning the recent killing of a British citizen by Al-Qaeda in Mali. Russia sought to

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eliminate any G8 reference to ongoing actions by opponents of democracy in Zimbabwe, which the United States, UK, Canada, and Japan strongly opposed. The latter group of delegations argued that the G8 could not lose sight of the fact that serious problems remain in Zimbabwe.

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